

# The Carmel Pine Cone

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## Deetjen's buys off-road vehicle so employees stranded on Partington Ridge can get to work

By CHRIS COUNTS

GETTING TO work each day is no small challenge for those who live on Big Sur's Partington Ridge, which was transformed into an island Dec. 24, 2012, when its access road was buried by a massive rock slide.

But the commute for three residents who work at Deetjen's Big Sur Inn has been eased by the generosity of their employer, which recently purchased an \$11,000 Polaris all-terrain vehicle.

Thanks to the "quad," residents can now save valuable time and energy as they negotiate a network of steep, rugged and unpaved private roads that lead on and off the ridge.

Deetjen's general manager Torrey Waag decided to buy the vehicle shortly after seeing the magnitude of the slide and realizing how long it would take to repair — and how difficult it would be for the employees to get to work on foot.

After first looking at a used vehicle and determining that "people really abuse their quads," Waag decided it made more sense to get a new one. "My idea was that if we bought this, and we only used it for four months before we resold it, it would still be a

cheap investment," he reasoned.

The quad has also come in handy at the inn, where it's been used to carry everything from laundry to firewood.

For the three ridge residents who work at Deetjen's — chef Domingo Santamaria, human resources manager

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PHOTO/COURTESY TORREY WAAG

Linda Rowland-Jones takes an all-terrain vehicle up a private dirt road to reach her home on Partington Ridge. The access road she usually travels on is blocked by a large rock slide.

## Disclosure forms open window on officials' conflicts of interest

By MARY SCHLEY

CITY ATTORNEY Don Freeman owns rental property in Seaside, a law firm in Carmel and a one-eighth share of the building it's in, along with a myriad of Wall Street investments. Mayor Jason Burnett owns a lot of stock, including shares of McDonald's, Coca-Cola and, of course, Hewlett-Packard. Police Chief Mike Calhoun has a painting business, and his wife works for the Diocese of Monterey. City councilman Steve Hillyard owns stock in Chevron, while planning commissioner Steve Dallas has several rental properties in town.

These are among the facts gleaned from "statements of economic interests" which California requires public officials to disclose. In order to guard against high-level officials making decisions for their own economic benefit, the California Fair Political Practices Commission requires they file statements each year declaring their investments, properties, gifts and other assets that could influence them.

While the governor and his cabinet, assemblymen, senators and judges all have to file the statements, so do local officials, including mayors and city council members, the county board of supervisors, county and city planning commissioners, treasurers, the district attorney, city managers, city attorneys and high-ranking law-enforcement officers, as well as anyone else entrusted with the investment of public funds.

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## Judge says Sierra Club, steelhead group won't get attorney's fees

By KELLY NIX

A SANTA Clara judge has refused to order the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District and California American Water to pay more than \$250,000 to the Sierra Club and a local steelhead group after the water board and Cal Am delayed a lawsuit challenging the State Water Resources Control Board's order that Monterey Peninsula residents drastically curtail their use of water from the Carmel River.

**A lawsuit is put off, but an attorney says he won and asks for \$250,000**

In the decision, Judge Peter H. Kirwan denied the Dec. 4, 2012, reimbursement request by the Sierra Club and the Carmel River Steelhead Association. Attorney Laurens Silver, who intervened in the suit to defend the cutback order, told The Pine Cone he's appealed the case to the 6th District Court of Appeals.

Silver said his efforts encouraged Cal Am and the MPWMD to drop their suit, and told Kirwan his fees came to \$256,934.

MPWMD attorney Heidi Quinn told The Pine Cone Kirwan issued the decision Dec. 18, 2012, but that her office only received notice of it last week. Quinn called the groups' filing a "needless drain on public resources."

In October 2009, the SWRCB imposed the cutback order, which requires Cal Am to reduce the amount of water it takes from the river by 70 percent, beginning in 2017. A week later, Cal Am and the water district filed suit, seeking to overturn the order. The Sierra Club and the steelhead group were "parties in interest" in the case, fighting to preserve the cutback order.

The case was dropped in August 2012, when Cal Am and the MPWMD decided they would rather concentrate their

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## P.G. sues school board, AT&T over cell tower removal

By KELLY NIX

THE CITY of Pacific Grove has filed a lawsuit against the Pacific Grove Unified School District and AT&T to prevent them from shutting down a cellular phone tower officials say is crucial for firefighters, police and paramedics to respond quickly to emergencies.

For the past two years, the school district has had a contract with AT&T to operate a cell tower at the P.G. adult school on Lighthouse Avenue. But on Jan. 14, AT&T was set to turn off the tower's power after expiration of its contract with PGUSD.

Decommissioning the tower, the city contends in its com-

## 'Not guilty' plea from Collins to all charges

By KELLY NIX

AS HE has maintained since being charged in fall 2011, former county water board director Steve Collins told a judge last week he is not guilty of dozens of felony and misdemeanor charges.

Collins on Jan. 11 pleaded not guilty before Monterey County Superior Court Judge Pamela Butler, who ruled in November 2012 that prosecutors had presented sufficient grounds for him to stand trial on charges he submitted fake invoices to a consulting client and broke state conflict-of-interest laws when he lobbied for an engineering firm to get a contract to run a new regional desal plant even while he served in an official capacity with authority over the \$400 million plant.

County prosecutors contend Collins — who declined to comment after his arraignment — committed fraud against Ocean Mist Farms by charging too much and submitting invoices for meetings he never attended.

He is also charged with receiving \$160,000 from RMC Water and Environment — the consulting company that won a \$28 million contract to manage the now-defunct regional desalination project — as he was lobbying for the plant to be

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plaint filed Jan. 10 in Monterey County Superior Court, would be dangerous for residents and public safety workers.

"City residents and visitors rely on the regular and emergency phone coverage provided by the cell site," according to the city. "Without cellular 911 coverage provided by the cell site, emergency response to fire, medical or criminal activity shall be impaired."

In a declaration supporting the city's claim, Monterey Fire Chief Andrew Miller said the loss of the tower would be a

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## 1.6-gallon toilets no longer good enough

By KELLY NIX

ALONG WITH roughly 800 new state laws in California this year, the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District has its own new rule requiring that homeowners and business owners start switching to "high-efficiency" toilets, which use a meager 1.28 gallons of water per flush.

"We are requiring the high efficiency toilets for new construction, remodels and replacement of old toilets," and when houses are sold, Stephanie Pintar, water demand manager for the MPWMD, told The Pine Cone.

But the water district — which is calling for the 1.28-gallon toilets instead of the previously mandated 1.6-gallon variety — is offering cash for some of those who retrofit their bathrooms with the new toilets.

"We will give up to \$200 dollars for voluntarily replacing an older toilet with a high-efficiency one," Pintar said.

Businesses can receive rebates for up to 20 toilets.

In the late 1990s, the water district board passed an ordinance requiring all "visitor-serving" business, such as hotels, restaurants and gas stations, to install 1.6-gal-

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